

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Please amend the claims as shown below:

Claims 1-13 (canceled)

Claim 14. (currently amended) A sheet processing apparatus, comprising:

a first roller pair rotatably held and driven for conveying a sheet received from an external apparatus;

a second roller pair rotatably held and driven for conveying the sheet conveyed from the first roller pair;

a guide channel between the first roller pair and the second roller pair through which each sheet passes, the guide channel formed by an upper guide plate and forming an open area below the upper guide plate;

a jogging tray on which sheets conveyed from the second roller pair via the guide channel are stacked and jogged;

a binding device for binding a stack of sheets received and jogged by the jogging tray; and

a controller for controlling the second roller pair so that during a standby operation, leading edge ends of sheets received from the external apparatus and conveyed by the

first roller pair one after another via the guide channel are pinched by the second roller pair while being overlapped and stacked one upon another with leading edges thereof shifted stepwise one after another and so that trailing edge ends of the stacked sheets are discharged into the open area while the stacked sheets are held by the second roller pair to be further conveyed by the second roller pair to the jogging tray, wherein the guide channel between the first roller pair and the second roller pair through which each sheet passes is formed by the upper guide plate and a lower pivotally movable guide plate, the lower pivotally movable guide plate capable of pivoting between a first position adjacent the upper guide plate to form the guide channel and a second position not adjacent the upper guide plate to form an open area below the upper guide plate and wherein the controller controls the second roller pair and the pivotally movable guide plate so that during a standby operation, leading edge ends of sheets received from the external apparatus and conveyed by the first roller pair one after another via the guide channel are pinched by the second roller pair while being overlapped and stacked one upon another with leading edges thereof shifted stepwise one after another and moves the pivotally movable guide plate to the second position not adjacent the upper guide plate to form the open area below the upper guide plate so that trailing edge ends of the stacked sheets are discharged into the open area while the stacked sheets are held by the second roller pair to be further conveyed by the second roller pair to the jogging tray.

Claim 15. (canceled)

Claim 16. (canceled)

Claim 17. (previously presented) The sheet processing apparatus according to Claim 14 wherein the controller controls the second roller pair so that the second roller pair is driven to intermittently rotate.

Claim 18. (previously presented) The sheet processing apparatus according to Claim 14, wherein the controller controls the second roller pair so that the second roller pair is driven to rotate at a speed slower than a speed of the first roller pair.

Claim 19. (previously presented) The sheet processing apparatus according to Claim 14, further comprising a device configured to cause the trailing edge end of each of the sheets conveyed by the first roller pair one after another to retreat from the conveying path to the open area after the sheet has been pinched by the second roller pair.

Claim 20. (currently amended) The sheet processing apparatus according to ~~Claim 15,~~ Claim 14, wherein during a normal operation, the controller controls the second roller pair to rotate at a speed substantially the same as a speed of the first roller pair and moves the pivotally movable guide plate to the first position adjacent the upper guide plate so that the sheets are conveyed by the first roller pair to the second roller pair via the guide channel and from the second roller pair to the jogging tray one after another without overlapping edges.

Claim 21. (currently amended) The sheet processing apparatus according to ~~Claim 16~~, Claim 14, further comprising:

a discharging device discharging the stack of sheets bound by the binding device from the jogging tray, and

wherein the standby operation occurs when the stack of sheets bound by the binding device has not been discharged from the jogging tray by the discharging device in a predetermined period of time or when the jogging tray has not returned to a reference position in a predetermined period of time.

Claim 22. (previously presented) The sheet processing apparatus according to Claim 14, wherein the first roller pair conveys the sheet from the external apparatus which comprises an image forming apparatus.

Claim 23. (currently amended) A method of operating a sheet processing system, comprising:

providing a sheet processing system comprising,

a first roller pair rotatably held and driven for conveying a sheet received from an external apparatus,

a second roller pair rotatably held and driven for conveying the sheet conveyed from the first roller pair,

a guide channel between the first roller pair and the second roller pair through which each sheet passes, the guide channel formed by an upper guide plate and forming an open area below the upper guide plate;

a jogging tray on which sheets conveyed from the second roller pair via the guide channel are stacked and jogged;

a binding device for binding a stack of sheets received and jogged by the jogging tray; and

a controller for controlling the second roller pair so that during a standby operation, leading edge ends of sheets received from the external apparatus and conveyed by the first roller pair one after another via the guide channel are pinched by the second roller pair while being overlapped and stacked one upon another with leading edges thereof shifted stepwise one after another and so that trailing edge ends of the stacked sheets are discharged into the open area while the stacked sheets are held by the second roller pair to be further conveyed by the second roller pair to the jogging tray, wherein the guide channel between the first roller pair and the second roller pair through which each sheet passes is formed by the upper guide plate and a lower pivotally movable guide plate, the lower pivotally movable guide plate capable of pivoting between a first position adjacent the upper guide plate to form the guide channel and a second position not adjacent the upper guide plate to form an open area below the upper guide plate and wherein the controller controls the second roller pair and the pivotally movable guide plate so that during a standby operation, leading edge ends of sheets received from the external apparatus and conveyed by the first roller pair one after another via the guide channel are

pinched by the second roller pair while being overlapped and stacked one upon another with leading edges thereof shifted stepwise one after another and moves the pivotally movable guide plate to the second position not adjacent the upper guide plate to form the open area below the upper guide plate so that trailing edge ends of the stacked sheets are discharged into the open area while the stacked sheets are held by the second roller pair to be further conveyed by the second roller pair to the jogging tray.

Claim 24. (currently amended) A sheet processing apparatus, comprising:

first roller means for conveying a sheet received from an external apparatus;

second roller means for conveying the sheet conveyed from the first roller pair;

guide channel means between the first roller means and the second roller means through which each sheet passes, the guide channel means formed by an upper guide plate means and forming an open area below the upper guide plate means;

jogging means on which sheets conveyed from the second roller means via the guide channel means are stacked and jogged;

binding means for binding a stack of sheets received and jogged by the jogging means; and

controller means for controlling the second roller means so that during a standby operation, leading edge ends of sheets received from the external apparatus and conveyed by the first roller means one after another via the guide channel means are pinched by the second roller means while being overlapped and stacked one upon another with leading edges thereof shifted stepwise one after another and so that trailing

edge ends of the stacked sheets are discharged into the open area while the stacked sheets are held by the second roller means to be further conveyed by the second roller pair to the jogging means, wherein the guide channel means between the first roller means and the second roller means through which each sheet passes is formed by the upper guide plate means and a lower pivotally movable guide plate means, the lower pivotally movable guide plate means capable of pivoting between a first position adjacent the upper guide plate means to form the guide channel means and a second position not adjacent the upper guide plate means to form an open area below the upper guide plate means and wherein the controller means controls the second roller means and the pivotally movable guide plate means so that during a standby operation, leading edge ends of sheets received from the external apparatus and conveyed by the first roller means one after another via the guide channel means are pinched by the second roller means while being overlapped and stacked one upon another with leading edges thereof shifted stepwise one after another and moves the pivotally movable guide plate means to the second position not adjacent the upper guide plate means to form the open area below the upper guide plate means so that trailing edge ends of the stacked sheets are discharged into the open area while the stacked sheets are held by the second roller means to be further conveyed by the second roller means to the jogging means.